

Testimony Regarding the FY24 Operating Budget of the Montgomery County Council

by Stephen Tao Jiang
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April 11, 2023

Good afternoon, Council members of the Montgomery County Council. My name is Stephen Tao Jiang, and I am in the Mental Health Advisory program. I am also a brother of Dementia patient. A family member of a young dementia patient recounted how the family accompanied our sister through the course of Dementia. I address you today, very respectfully, to expose my case and request help.

My request is to add more funding to this Montgomery County's Dementia Friendly America initiative program that include care for Dementia patient with special needs. **Generally**, Dementia is a disease for the elderly or over 65 years old patient, but now there are a small number of "young dementia" under the age of 65. These patients and their families face many unique challenges.

My sister has two master's degrees and a Ph.D. She is a shrewd and decisive leader at work and performs well. It is difficult to associate her with dementia. My sister's illness worsened suddenly, she couldn't sleep at night, yelled loudly during the day, was very sensitive to volume and easily got angry because of it. Eventually she became taciturn, needed a wheelchair to go out, and needed assistance in daily life. This was the most frustrating year for the family, and we even wondered whether we had done something wrong.

Dementia is the most expensive chronic condition in the US, and the direct and indirect costs of care for Marylanders with dementia are extremely high. Dementia represents an urgent and costly public health crisis in Montgomery County. The extra skills and training required to care for a patient with dementia lead to its higher cost. This aims to support people with dementia and their caregivers in one

of our County's local communities. We need your support because this will benefit not only my family but also many families in Montgomery County.

According to the Greater Maryland Chapter Alzheimer's Association, family history is not necessary for an individual to develop Dementia's; however, research shows that those who have a parent or sibling with Dementia's are more likely to develop the disease than those who do not have a first-degree relative with Dementia's. Maryland's 2022 population of 115,000 Alzheimer's patients, and this is projected to increase by 18% to 130,000 by 2025. In 2022 Montgomery County's population, 24.2% of the population is from age 45 to 64, and 11.2% of the population is who were 65 years of age or older. Dementia will represent an urgent and costly public health crisis in Montgomery County.

In Montgomery County there is only activity program that **Montgomery County's Dementia Friendly America initiative** are deemed as "therapeutic" and found through a public private partnership, Montgomery County is developing thoughtful initiatives that continue empower the community so caregivers and their families who are experiencing dementia are supported. A main thrust of the effort is to educate those in businesses, religious institutions and nonprofits to understand the signs of dementia and learn the best ways to work with, and assist, those suffering from it. We have seen many people living with early stage dementia living very successfully in their communities.

Our recommended Montgomery County **Fiscal Year 2024 Operating Budget** recognize the significant impact that the dementia has had on County residents and the need for the County to continue to fund these services that our residents need to grow and thrive without Federal support. We look forward to more government resources and non-governmental organizations investing in courses of new treatments, preventions and, ultimately, a cure suitable for young people with dementia in the future to help them develop their remaining functions and provide respite and support for their families. I am speaking today in hopes of inspiring you to support more resources suitable for young people with dementia, and donate generously. That way they can help more patients like my sister.